

The Midland

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Victory

By MAHLON LEONARD FISHER

Sweet shape uplifted on the warrior's shield,
When that the battle's past, tho he be stark;
Bright flower that blossoms out of seeming dark;
Cool draught a-gush from fountains eon-sealed;
Two-edged sword no craven's hand may wield;
Deep chalice that no quivering lip may drain;
High tower whose shining stair is paved with
pain,—

All praise is thine at last on every field!
Men laud thee where thou art; where thou hast been
They worship, twining ivies round thy shrine;
Where myriads bled they say, "Here, hued like
wine,

A mighty torrent Triumph bore serene!"
Nor trembles he at end whose questioning breath,
"What is thine ultimate goal?" Death stops with
"Death!"

The Messiah Chorus of Lindsborg—

PIONEERS OF ART

By G. N. MALM

About forty-seven years ago, a small band of immigrants, direct from Sweden, settled in the Smoky Hill Valley, in the central part of Kansas, now known as the wheat belt, then a wilderness. Their religion was that of the puritan and their ambition was home building. They were exceedingly pious and in daily communion with their God, as they knew and understood Him. They set their brawny arms and hardy hands to the gigantic task of making the desert bloom as the rose. As each obstacle appeared they conducted themselves as heroes—as heroes of creation, not of annihilation, as soldiers of life, not of death. At each season, as the seed was cast in the newly broken furrow, as each kernel was dropped in the foreign soil, one little rootlet after the other crept furtively from the heart of the earnest homeseeker into the ground that gradually became his, until he was himself securely transplanted and safely growing in the new clime. And as gradually one after the other dropped off, as father and mother were laid to rest under the strange willows, as the first fruits, the little dear ones, born in privation and want, were

mournfully tucked away under the brown sod, the land became the sacred inheritance of the survivor, part and parcel of his own self.

They came from a beautiful country, these pioneers. We know Sweden as the land of the midnight sun, as the home of Jenny Lind, John Erikson, Berzelius, Linné, and Tegnér. Not by mistake, but in endearing terms, we call it little. It is a land of song and saga, and these plain folks in homespun long coat and shawl had home-grown traditions and a time honored culture to build upon, an influence to be felt in generations to come. Dissenters from the state church of Sweden, which had grown too despotic to their liking, and reading the scriptures themselves, they were nicknamed "Readers," a good name to have in days like ours, when illiteracy is made a national issue.

They had among them a leader, one Olof Olson, then a newly ordained minister, who knew his flock and could attend to its wants. He was a seer and a prophet. He had imagination and saw a great future on the prairie. Though it fell to the lot of another to make realities of his visions, he proved to be the inspiration of the Messiah Chorus of Lindsborg. While the early history of the organization is rather obscure, evidences show that the task of this man "crying in the wilderness" was far from an easy one. The first years on the prairie were filled with doubts and fears as to the future in store for the little flock. There would come to these brave scouts

a longing for the hills and dales of their childhood homes, for shelter amidst their own kin, for the cheery hearth in the cottage "back home," far over the sea. They grew restless waiting for a dubious harvest; and a latent healthy energy threatened to exhaust itself in religious disputes, in solemn altercations about "Atonement" and "Redemption." But the young minister faced it all bravely, and for seven long years he labored faithfully among his people, making the rough places plain, and preparing the way for generations to come. In 1876, however, he was discovered. The Augustana College and Theological Seminary, representing the Swedish American Lutherans, found in Olof Olson a diamond in the rough, a sincere man of noble desires, deep convictions, high intellect, and thorough education. He was too valuable for such a rural setting. As a teacher of teachers he was a rare discovery and thus the prairie lost him. But his heart lingered long with his little flock out there in Kansas and his one ambition was to give them a teacher in his place, a leader and a builder, a man for all their needs.

Among his pupils was one Carl Aaron Swensson. He was born of Swedish parents in Chandler's Valley, Pennsylvania, in 1857; his father was a pioneer parson in the little Swedish settlement. He had energy to spare, and above all, enthusiasm. A pioneer born, he recognized no hardships. Devoted to his calling, the ministry, he was ready to sacrifice all. Glad and eager to go west, he was entrusted

with the charge of the flock in Smoky Hill Valley. In 1879, just out of college, ready for anything, he took up his task with an enthusiasm that made even the brave settler gaze in wonder. His optimism knew no bounds; to him everything seemed possible on these prairies. Work was to him play, and he played on. A close student, he soon found his people very interesting. He discovered in these sober farmers, beside their physical stamina, a poetic strain; with their dogged endurance, an optimism that reverberated in his own soul. They listened to what he had to say and there was mutual understanding. He wrote, taught, preached, in a way that carried conviction, and the kind-hearted puritan took a liking to the pioneer-preacher's son. Teaching them, he learned himself; and he taught and explained his views to his people until his most daring dreams seemed to him possible of realization. And in his old teacher he found a stimulus and an inspiration; his watchful eye was a blessing.

The new preacher was a dreamer and had great hopes for his people. Golden harvests would bring wealth and around each little home would grow up broods of flaxen-haired boys and girls, who would in time demand conservation. His first great inspiration was a school, a Christian institution of higher learning. And a school he founded. Before any one realized what it was all about, he had the work well under way. That the first day's enrollment showed two professors and no pupil did not discourage him.

It was not his fault, and besides, it might have been worse. It might have been vice versa. He knew his school would grow, and it did. Bethany College stands to-day second to none in the state. The seed was fertile and the soil was good, but the plant had to have care. Land in Kansas could then be had for the asking, but money was scarce, and the crying need of funds for Bethany College was the first incentive for the Messiah Chorus of to-day. Necessity is the mother of discovery as well as of invention; the pastor discovered that his people could sing. Often had he been thrilled by the fervent singing at church. Their clear voices were tuned aright and the tradition of song was in their blood. And there was also that precious surplus energy, a good deal of which was wasted. Why not turn it all into useful channels? In his young wife he had a confidante, and to her he opened his heart.

Emerson was right. Every great institution is but the lengthened shadow of one man. Why not add—also woman? Mrs. Alma Swensson was an organist, and it is due to her talents and musical ability that the dreams and visions of her illustrious husband became realities. She directed the first chorus and shares with him the honor of being its founder.

Through Dr. Olof Olson, who on a visit to London in 1879 had heard "The Messiah" and on his return to Rock Island had organized a chorus for the purpose of singing Handel's masterpiece, they learned of this sacred oratorio. What could be done in Illi-

nois could as well be done in Kansas; the score was ordered, and in January, 1882, before any one realized the greatness of the undertaking, the work was well under way. From the fields came the plowboy in the evening, and his sister was with him. Measure by measure the notes were hammered in and the singing school in the little parsonage became the center of attraction for miles around. The Smoky Hills re-echoed "The Glory of the Lord" as the farmer lustily sang it on his way home through the starlit winter night, and the young mother would hum strains from "The Messiah" to her babe in the sod house.

The task of the little music mistress can best be understood when one considers that to many of her pupils the "Messiah" score was the first printed music they had ever looked into. The chorus numbered forty-eight singers who learned to know their parts and know them well. Unconscious of academic rules and conventions they could break none, but sang with their whole heart; their soul was in their singing. On Good Friday, 1882, they were ready to give their first concert.

While records of the first year in the history of the organization are meager, this first venture proved a great success financially as well as artistically. The oratorio was rendered five times in Lindsborg and surrounding settlements. A net gain of two hundred dollars was realized; this was placed as a nest egg for the school and showed possibilities for the future. The chorus directress looked into the beaming eyes

of her manager, and he smiled, "I told you so." The school passed through all the stages from Academy to College, but the music grew with it, furnishing funds when all other sources were exhausted. People will pay to hear themselves sing, and soon others are willing to foot the bill also. The movement grew because it was in the people's heart. It became traditional and as such, sacred. The best musical talent was secured to insure improvement. Young men and women, grown up in the cult, became leaders and teachers. The struggle for recognition was short and decisive, for the people out there in Lindsborg had the real article and musical America made a pathway to their door. Great artists have found their way out there. Nordica visited the place twice and sang to appreciative audiences. Her magic singing found ready response in the hearts of the musical plainsmen. In their enthusiasm after one of her concerts they unhitched the horses from her cab and drew it to the hotel, an incident not soon forgotten by their chosen song-queen. Gadske has appeared three times in Lindsborg, Sembrich, Heine-mann, Langendorf, Schumann-Heink, Julia Claussen, Christine Miller, Norelli, Ragna Linne, Alice Nielsen, Bispham, Holmquist and a score of other illustrious artists have all had full houses of worshipping listeners in the little prairie town. Schumann-Heink has offered to give a benefit recital for Bethany College in September this year. Popular music and "rag-time" may be tolerated and at times enjoyed as one

would a piece of candy, but for musical food-value the people of Lindsborg keep to the classics as the worker to his meat and bread.

And the influence is now bearing fruit throughout the state and farther. Many towns have patterned their choral societies after the chorus in Lindsborg, and good art in music has become the standard for all these. As the first concerts were held at Easter time, so each year this, the holy week, is set aside for the best there is in music and art. Music lovers from far and near gather at this musical Mecca on the plains of Kansas to hear the Gospel of Art, preached by these common everyday folks, and to revive their faith in life beautiful by listening to these rural choristers, whose performances are in many respects unsurpassed.

This year marks the thirty-fourth in the history of the organization, officially known as "The Bethany Oratorio Society." The chorus has a membership of five hundred. The orchestra, of about fifty instruments, is only three years younger than the chorus. "The Messiah" has been rendered ninety-six times in Lindsborg and always to large and appreciative audiences. In fact the audience is limited only by the capacity of the music hall and the uncertainty of the weather. But, while the oratorio so often rendered has given the organization its name and fame and is as a matter of course a dear favorite, it is a popular mistake that this is the only music sung by the chorus. At least one grand concert is

given in the fall of each year, when some other worthy classic is rendered. The present director, Mr. Hagbard Brase, is now planning for a thorough study of the "Matthäus-Passion" by Bach.

While the chorus was the inspiration of a great soul, the building of this musical monument has always meant hard work and great sacrifice to those in charge. Dr. Swensson, who died in 1904, was succeeded by Dr. Philblad. Trained in the service and fired by the same spirit, he has faithfully continued upholding the tradition. After thirty-four years the movement has reached maturity and stability. Mrs. Swensson is still singing in the soprano section and still studying among the beginners, for each year brings new singers. For her unselfish work she has gained the love and respect of the entire community, a full third of which is actively engaged in the work. Centered around one great interest, the community spirit is fostered and fed, and the end is not yet.

And the chorus itself is dreaming. It has visions as to the future. In 1918 the oratorio will be rendered the ninety-ninth and the hundredth time. The goal is a new music hall worthy of the occasion, and some enthusiasts are seriously contemplating finishing this first centenary in the "dear old auditorium" and beginning the next in a new home. They are on the lookout, there in musical Lindsborg, for a big-hearted benefactor with means to make their dreams come true. The building of a worthy temple for their song would make any man famous, fostering as it would, a worthy cause. Where is he?

At the thirty year anniversary, the Chorus presented its first directress a gold medal. On it were inscribed the words: "One soweth, and another reapeth," and long will Kansas, yea America, reap the fruits of what loving hands planted out there in the Smoky Hill Valley.

The Endowment

By IRVING N. BRANT

To Dante heaven and hell, to Chaucer earth,
The Muses gave for their apportioned spheres.
Then Shakespeare came, and as of little worth,
They tendered him no realm but laughs and tears.
With eager lips he touched his reed, whence fell
The harmonies of earth, and heaven, and hell.

To an April Skylark

By EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

In thy soft-limbed cherry-tree
Blossoming beside the sea,
Art thou laughing at a cloud?
Thy mate is circling silver-loud.

The golden-petalled cup of dawn
Hath never held a whiter morn
Mirrored in a skylark's eyes
Twinkling silver-soft surprise.

Laughing down a merry hill
Every ray doth beauty spill.
White and singing from the sun
The happy streams of beauty run.

Little honey-haunted throat,
Cease thy golden-fluted note.
By the silence of the sea
In thy dreaming cherry-tree

Mingle wonder with thy song.
Love be silent, life is long.
Then thy music in a prayer
Shall soften all the singing air

Into wonder white as thine,
White as dreams within a shrine,
Clear as music from a cloud.—
So thy song saith silver-loud.

Easter at Oxford.

The Crowning

By KATHARINE KINGSLEY CROSBY

Katie Kerry lay in her bed in the dark room off the kitchen and cried. Her six-year-old twin brothers—Katie herself was going on eighteen—squabbled over a pack of cards on the kitchen floor. The door into the common hallway stood open. The twins had left it open so that they would surely see the doctor when he came. It was raining too hard to see much through the window. The doctor had been sent for to the woman upstairs—Mis' Halloran—and they were anxious not to lose sight of him, for it was understood that he would bring a baby with him when he came. Their sister did not care whether the door stood shut or open. She lay in her bed and cried.

"I'd like to thmash their fathe off'n um," Francis Xavier Kerry broke out, snapping down a lop-eared ace on his brother's murky deuce.

"Whose face, you chump?" demanded John Aloysius, frowning heavily upon his fist of cards.

"Them folkth in Brockton, o' course, where Katie got sick."

"Aw, 'twasn't them done it to her. She used to cry before ever she went out there. Not all the time, maybe, like she does now, but some. Say—listen! The doctor's down't the door—p'raps he's got the baby with him. Make Katie quit, can't yer?"

Francis tiptoed across to the door of the bedroom.

"Shut yer mouth, Katie! The doctor'th bringin' a baby, and we wanter hear—"

Katie caught her breath and sat up in bed. "Whose baby?" she gasped, "quick, Francie—whose baby? Does Mother know?"

"Sure she doth—ain't she up there with Mis' Halloran now, waitin' for him to come?"

"Oh—hers!" Katie slipped down among the lean pillows and lay quiet.

Satisfied that his sister no longer made a troublesome noise, Francie rejoined his twin, waiting breathless at the hall door. When the doctor passed with his black bag of miracles in one hand and a dripping umbrella in the other, Francie nudged his brother in the ribs.

"Mutht be in the bag!" he whispered, excitedly.

John Aloysius resented the nudge, and a free-for-all on the kitchen floor resulted. Chairs and table-legs becoming involved, along with the dishpan drying on the back of the stove, the racket brought Mrs. Kerry downstairs to settle matters. Her high and heavy hand fell upon the twins briefly and with authority. When they had resumed their interrupted game their voices were lowered to cautious undertones.

It seemed that Mis' Halloran wasn't feeling very well. Being as it was her first kid, it was natural that she should be disturbed about it, for—what if it was a girl? Sometimes doctors are awful careless-like. Lucky Ma was on the spot. If she told him to go

home and get a boy, he'd do it. Folks had to do what Ma said, sooner or later, of course.

Except Katie. Ma couldn't make her stop bawling. She'd done nothing else ever since she came home from visiting those folks out in Brockton. It was most a week now, and the doctor said she'd die pretty soon if she didn't stop. But even Ma couldn't make her. That was a solemnizing thought.

Before going upstairs again, Mrs. Kerry looked in to see how Katie was, and to give her a snack of the news. "Mis' Halloran's doing grand," she said, straightening the bedclothes vigorously; "but say,—you'd oughter see her man! Glory to God, but he's havin' a fit. 'Is she dyin', Mis' Kerry?' he says, 'is she dyin' yet?' Well, what d'ye know? And she with the door open, hearing it all. Believe me, I was some mad. 'You skinny vagabon,' I says, 'I'll lick the face off you fer another word,' I says. Mis' Halloran, she had to laugh, the way I said it. But I meant it, all right."

She eyed the girl sharply for a responsive look or smile. But Katie seemed not to have heard. She had her arms about a pillow and was hugging it to her, her face half hidden in its folds. Mrs. Kerry leaned over and stroked her hair with awkward, work-roughened fingers.

"But it's you that want to be glad, darlin', for havin' it over and done with. Now see if yer can't be getting some sleep, like a good girl."

"And how can I be sleeping," Katie wailed, "when all I dream of is my baby, and the little cry of her,

when they was takin' her away? Wakin' and sleepin' I hear it—oh Mother, do you s'pose they're carin' for her good, like I'd be doing myself? Will they give her enough to eat, and be patient with her, like I would? Oh my Gawd, will the Sisters cuddle her in the two arms of them, and her my baby?" She buried her face deeper in the pillows and fell a-weeping passionately.

Mrs. Kerry had heard those weary questions many times this last week, and each time, with a patience new to her indeed, had given soothing assurances of the baby's welfare. This time, however, she added, with a touch of anxiety,

"You know Mother's doing it for the best, don't you, darlin'?"

Katie's only answer was to cry the harder.

"Because you know, any minute you'd say you would marry that man" (even yet Mrs. Kerry could not bring herself to name him, although she knew well enough who he was and considered that he had acted well under the circumstances), "we'd send for Sister Theresa to come wit' the baby. And she'd come, the little feet of her runnin' that fast you could hardly see them, and the kid in her arms. Then on Sunday they'd be publishin' the bans, and—"

"Don't, don't," sobbed Katie, "oh don't, I can't bear it. I can't marry him! Haven't I told ye—and told ye—he isn't fit for any girl to marry. I hate him. Oh-h, I hate him!" She shuddered against the pillow.

"Any man is fit to marry," Mrs. Kerry said sternly, "when he's the father of your child and makin' a good living. Anybody'd think you would be glad enough to marry him for your own good name, let alone what it would mean to your family, and wantin' your baby."

"Don't, don't."

"Well, and I will then," she flamed; "here I've been working my hands off, scraping the money together to pay for your sickness, and now the three dollars a week for the kid's board all has to come out of your sister Mamie and me, and she half sick the while herself."

"And more than that, Katie Kerry," she pursued, warming to her theme, "more than that, I've lied till I'm scared to go to confession at all, I am, with the blackness on my soul—just to save the likes of you from the tongues of the neighbors. And the rest of us, too, God help me. I'm respectable, I am, and I've kept so, when it ain't been so easy, with four childer to raise and keep shoes on, and me a widow all the while. You're not going to put shame on me, this late day, I can tell yer, nor on Mamie neither, with her feller comin' to see her steady, nor on the twins, and them just kids."

"If you want yer baby bad enough, you'll marry the man what's responsible. You've only to say the word, and the kid'll be here in the hour."

"I can't—I can't, never, never!"

Mrs. Kerry straightened up. "Then ye can lie

here till ye rot," said she, and marched out of the room and away upstairs.

After she had gone Katie lay silent for a while, exhausted. There was nothing in the least heroic about her. She was just a sick little girl who knew no better than to cry her eyes out for something she couldn't have at her own price.

If she hadn't chanced to hear her baby cry as they took it away, most of the trouble would have been saved. That sound seemed to have made a mother of her far more surely than any mere physical process could have done. There had been no such revelation during the sodden days of waiting; shame, fear, and sullen rebellion had precluded that. No one had wanted the baby, and herself least of all. Now she wanted it more than anything else in the world, except her freedom from "the man."

"If 'twas anyone but him—but *him*," she shivered, and whimpered "what I ever could a-seen in him!"

Her first beau, perhaps. She was a plain girl, not used to attentions from men, and not altogether clear as to their ultimate purposes. When a rejected suitor of her mother's, a captain on a dredger down the harbor, began taking her to the movies and saving his tobacco tags for her, she must have lost her head. After matters had been rushed to a swift and, to her, quite unforeseen conclusion, she came to herself, too late to do any good.

It was natural enough that her mother should not understand how she felt about him. It seemed to

her that if he was good-natured enough to be willing to marry the girl—which most men wouldn't, the way things was—she'd oughter be grateful, instead of making all this fuss. Straight-seeing people overlook a number of considerations along the side; they wouldn't be straight-seeing if they didn't.

Of course if Katie had stopped to think, she would have realized that her baby belonged to her, price or no price. But she was in no mood for thought, and too sick to try. Her hot breasts throbbed and ached with their milk. She longed for the relief of feeding her baby with the keenest physical desire she had ever known. But she longed for it more—much, much more—because it was her baby and she wanted it in her arms, where it belonged.

"I wouldn't mind the pain nor nothin'," she moaned to the lean pillow, "if I could have her, just oncet. The weenty small hands of her, holdin' on mine, and the soft little cuddlin' body—oh Gawd, I want my baby!"

The twins were still playing with their cards on the kitchen floor. The wet gray light of a rainy afternoon barely enabled them to see the markings of the suits. Their absorption in the game only wavered when the doctor went out, to return again shortly with the same black bag—but no knowing what was in it, of course. When the door upstairs was opened to him, the sound of excited voices came out into the hall.

"Betcher it'th a boy now," whispered Francis Xavier.

"Sure, that's what he went back for," John Aloysius agreed, with profound conviction. They tiptoed out into the hall, all ears.

It was very quiet again. The voices of the women were hushed. The whole house seemed listening. The twins held their breaths and peered into the dusky stair-well above. Even Katie, in her room off the kitchen, lay still.

Then up there through the open door, piercing the silence of the house, came the wail of a new-born baby. God never made a sound more tearing at mother-heartstrings than the first thin, wispy cry of our babies. Katie heard it, and rose on her knees in bed to listen. Her lips parted, she forgot to breathe. It came again, the little wailing cry. Again. . . .

Then something within her that all her mother's arguments had failed to reach, that her own pain and longing had not stirred, was swept away before the flood of a great valiancy. Her soul grew strong within her, with a strength that would carry her through the years. The swollen, tear-wet face fairly blazed with the glory of her crowning.

"Francie!" she cried, "Francie! Call Mother, quick! Tell her—tell her I will! I will! Oh, be quick!"

Some April Evening

By LYMAN BRYSON

Some April evening when the sky
 With a blue and silver fringe
Lies upon the earth so nigh
 That far hills take on its tinge,

Under elm trees black and tall,
 You will stand in this same place,
And a few cool drops may fall
 Soft upon your upturned face.

If you call them only rain,
 Thinking I am gone past tears,
Their long falling shall be vain,
 And I'll be gone with my dead years.

For they shall be tokens sent,
 By a ghostly fond device,
From one who finds his Heaven spent
 And weeps, alone in Paradise.

Trees and the Homestead

By ROBERT BRADFORD WYLIE

Nature is rich in companion parts. One sees on every hand the fine adjustments of life to life and life to land. The fitness of these specializations has led to bookish phrases which at most are but feeble reflections of the world of fact about us. How often as we walk some path we feel the setting as fitted for wild rose or gentian,—the place seems to need them. Or if it be along shaded ways we pause to listen for the voices of the woodland before the first note of the birds has reached us,—they belong there. May we not have in these correspondences the basis of our own instinctive satisfaction in the world of outdoors? Do we not find here the reason for our natural love of trees? For we are ourselves a part of nature and are still in her hands in far greater measure than we realize.

Man's life has been bound up with forests. Through the childhood of the race they sheltered and nourished him. Ministering to his necessities, they were interwoven with all his feelings of comfort and so with his happiness as well. Their fruits invited his hands to industry and his growing craftsmanship was largely the shaping of forest products. With larger achievement came no less of dependence upon plants but through them more of delight and inspiration. Then in the fullness of time when man came to know himself and to look inward and upward, "The

groves were God's first temples'' and through their boughs he caught his first spiritual visions.

To-day though at home in the most artificial of environments one still senses the thrill of these racial memories. Who does not feel a satisfaction in scanning the sky line from some hill top though now no fear of enemies prompts the survey? The feel of the soil, the odors of the breeze, the crash of the storm, and the patter of rain drops on our shelter stir us because they bring back forgotten memories of the childhood of our race in the forests of earth.

Thus it is that our ideal homestead is in the midst of trees. Their branches spread out sheltering arms that are no less a part of the home than the broad hall-way or the cheerful fireplace. In summer they cast friendly shadows which lengthen each evening pointing to the coming day. Autumn's glorious foliage spreads out in celebration of what the sun and the showers of the season have wrought. Winter feathers their branches with crystal foliage or wraps them in softest white, and in spring their opening buds herald the new year and prophesy its fruitage.

Quite as fully as the buildings themselves do trees give character to our dwellings. More accurately than brick and stone they reveal the mind and heart of the owner. In them is one of life's compensations, for do not the oak and the elm grow alike for the rich and for the poor? The humble cottage in its setting of flowers and foliage may be more attractive than the lordly mansion. That one who plants wisely and gives to the work a little of his leisure will reap

a hundred fold; he not only makes his own home beautiful, but his trees and vines make powerful though voiceless appeal to all who pass that way. Thus does a man live through his trees long after the hands have rested from their labors.

Is there not a message in all this for the great midland between the lakes and the plains? Here lie the most fertile areas in the world; their industries already diversified and their institutions outstripping those of longer growth. It would require no prophetic vision to see the future of these lands,—the best on our continent. Our fathers met well the problems and difficulties of pioneer days; it remains for us of this generation to develop wisely the empire they have given us. Shall we not make this region beautiful as well as rich? Indeed, this must be done if the children of the land realize their full heritage.

Pioneer days are past, not only for this middle land, but for the country as a whole. The material resources of the nation have been developed to the point that something of stability begins to appear. Free lands no longer beckon. The old homestead is coming to offer better opportunities than lands under the setting sun. As people come to realize that not only the children but possibly children's children will live on the farm or in the home where they now dwell there will be double incentive to make permanent and beautiful these homesteads.

There stands a house, beautiful in itself, but bare to the sky and the winds. The storms of winter strike it with unbroken fury and in summer the chil-

dren are prisoners in the narrow zone of shade by the doorway. The passing stranger hurries by; there is little suggestion of cheer in winter or charm in summer.

Here is a home, though only a cottage. Great elms stand well apart by the roadside. Beneath their arching branches one sees the grassy lawn, its surface broken here and there by clumps of shrubbery. Masses of foliage border the grounds, and behind rises the background of trees and shrubs tempering the winds and screening the distance. Nearer the house one or two large trees spread protecting arms above the roof, and in their shade are hammock and swing. Flowers lend their color and fragrance, and clambering vines invite to cool retreats. The traveller pauses in the shade by the gate and envies the household and its guests.

Shakespeare

By IRVING N. BRANT

He stands with eyes fixed beyond the stars,
Piercing the darkness of that vast remote
Where shimmering worlds like fiery glow-worms
float

And beckon from their firmamental bars.
Kings are his vassals. Like a sceptered Mars
He reigns alone, and at his vibrant note,
Great Cawdor's castle trembles to the moat,
And upward to the highest turret jars.
Apart he dwells, yet not so much alone
But he may feel humanity's warm breath,
And claim its joys and sorrows for his own.
Apart he dwells, yet near him lingereth,
Careworn and weary, by life's breezes blown,
One who would sheltered be, or welcome death.



The Midland Library

In June, 1915, the first "Pageant of Lincoln" was given at Lincoln, Nebraska. The pageant was so worthy and so well received that the Lincoln Commercial Club decided to support the giving of a pageant in June of every year.

The book of the second pageant, the pageant of June, 1916, has now been printed. The author is Mr. Hartley B. Alexander, who wrote also the book of the pageant of 1915. The title of the second pageant is "The Gate City," a name by which Omaha is known. Surely never before did an American community so finely offer to substitute rivalry in courtesy, generosity and art (the expression of such highest things) for the mean and petty rivalries that have been all too common. Omaha will indeed be golden, beyond Coronado's dream, if in this new, fine and high rivalry it can return Lincoln's compliment worthily.

The best fortune that could come to our land would be that its people should prefer noble things to ignoble. Giving the noble in the hope that it will be preferred is surely the finest work that an American or any other man can do; and this is work that Mr. Alexander can do and is doing. To outgrow vulgarity and meanness is to outgrow the corruptions that are but signs thereof, pains incident to the disease. Mr. Alexander's fine and great work in the annual "Pageant of Lincoln" is as right and wholesome as was the gift to America of the statue of Liberty from generous France,—a gift more potent than trickery or war.

Lincoln has a wonderful opportunity in responding to its pageant and supporting it; not every city has a Hartley B. Alexander. And the happiness of the situation is that

Lincoln seems to realize its opportunity; it does give support and response. In the past, now and then a city has seemed to evolve a soul. The phenomenon may reappear, and Lincoln become a place of pilgrimage. If, then, there should be jealousy of Lincoln, other communities may win for themselves equal privileges on equal terms; but these terms include a Hartley B. Alexander and a citizenry steadfast in preference of art to the movies and the amateur minstrel show.

Miss Cornelia L. Meigs, the winner of the Drama League competition, is a native of Keokuk, Iowa. Her play, *The Steadfast Princess*, is a very pretty little drama written in smooth verse with graceful diction. It will appeal particularly to all who liked her *Kingdom of the Winding Road*.

Herbert Quick's amusing story, *The Brown Mouse*, in which local politics and local personages furnish a background for the whole rural school problem, has been, it is interesting to note, adopted as one of the teachers' reading circle books in several middle western states. (Bobbs-Merrill Co. \$1.25.)

All fun-loving readers of *Penrod* will be cheered by Booth Tarkington's new book, *Seventeen*, "a tale of youth and summer time and the Baxter family." (Harper. \$1.35.)

In his series of vigorous sketches, *America at Work* (Houghton Mifflin Co. \$1.00), Joseph Husband has given us a book dignified, pulsating with energy. In it, stark against a background of a thousand hills, of wind-swept dunes, of country, town, and foggy lake, are revealed the great elemental forces of to-day—the foundries, the switch-

board of a great city, the mills grinding grain for a nation's bread. Through its pages, shot with the glare of forge-fires, the clear green of semaphores, the gleam of white-hot rivets, move steadfastly the "Sons of Martha." It is truly "America at Work." Mr. Husband has done a great thing in seeing and revealing thus to others the power and beauty of these commonplaces of life; a still greater thing in not forgetting "the stars that race beside us."

Of especial interest to Middle Western readers is the announcement that David Grayson, the author of *Adventures in Friendship*, *Adventures in Contentment*, *The Friendly Road*, and *Hempfield*, is in reality Mr. Ray Stannard Baker. Mr. Baker was born in Lansing, Michigan, studied at the Michigan Agricultural College and at the University of Michigan, and was for five years connected with the *Chicago Record*.

Old California and Monterey, its one-time gay and luxurious capital, form the setting of a narrative poem, *Glorietta or the City of Fair Dreams*, by S. H. M. Byers (Grafton Publishing Corporation, Los Angeles.) The plot interest of the story is enhanced by the beauty of the background and by the peculiar romantic glamour associated with this "Little Spain." The illustrations by Langdon Smith are excellently done with a feeling for this background and atmosphere.

In these war-clouded days of hasty condemnation and passionate invective, when "every man has a seeing spot and all the rest of him is blind," it is a relief to find as sane and thorough a discussion of one of the topics most insistently thrust upon us as Edward A. Steiner's *Confession of a Hyphenated American*. (Fleming Revell Co. \$0.50.)

After admitting being a hyphenated American "according to Webster—not according to Roosevelt," the author alleges that present difficulties are due not to the hyphen but to the inflamed hyphen. His classification of the manifestations of this disease—*The Atlantic Ocean Hyphen, The Impounded Hyphen, The Political Hyphen, The Sympathetic Hyphen*—is clever, suggestive, of a kind to make us stop and think. So, too, is his discussion of *Hyphenated Patriotism*; and his suggested *Remedies* should produce not only thought but action. Mr. Steiner is no idle dreamer; he knows of what he speaks. Inspired by sincere devotion to his adopted country, he can do more than most men to make us realize our faults, our dangers, our very great advantages.

Lewis Worthington Smith is the author of *The English Tongue* (Four Seas Company), a book of war poems. Of especial merit are the title poem, *The English Tongue*, and *The Aircraft*. The first of these is well fashioned, both in diction and versification. It finds its justification in such lines as

"Idle is place,
Power, and the marching of armies, if those they
 enthrall
Thrill to no word-glow together, no cry and no
 call."

The Aircraft is a poem worthily conceived and worthily rendered; on the whole, it is the best in the book and a respectable distance above most of the war poetry to-day rampant.

This volume is one of a new series of moderately priced books, tastefully bound in stiff paper, now being issued by

the Four Seas Company. The titles comprise verse and drama by modern authors.

Miss Cather's book *O Pioneers!* placed her high among American writers of fiction; it is with pleasant anticipation, therefore, that one opens her latest novel, *The Song of the Lark* (Houghton Mifflin Co. \$1.40.) And one's confidence is not misplaced. The story is excellent—vivid, real, glowing with feeling.

The region in which it opens is as yet almost untouched by American artists, but that it is rich in possibilities Miss Cather has shown. In the sun-drenched little Colorado town there is with all its crudities a gleaming beauty, a soundness and vitality that make it most significant; scenes there, such as the dance at Spanish Johnny's, will stand out long in the reader's memory. But the town is after all only a background for the people. The portrayal of them is one of the greatest values of the book. Calm, far-seeing Mrs. Kronberg, kindly Dr. Archie, the broken music-master Wunsch, these and many more are touched in with rare sympathy and skill. All of them influence in some way Thea Kronberg.

The account of her development—of her early days in Moonstone, her student life in Chicago, her full summer among the homes of the cliff-dwellers—sweeps on with a sustained power much like the singer's own art. Only at the last does the book fail. There it lacks the spontaneity, the wealth of knowledge and sympathetic insight so pronounced in the description of Thea's girlhood. The figure we see winning triumphs at the Metropolitan seems not a real woman who has experienced unhappiness and success, but rather a puppet produced according to a formula for the creation of an artist.

But after all, this is only one weakness among many good things. If Miss Cather's work here lacks a certain freshness that gave delight in *O Pioneers!*, the loss is balanced by a gain in technique, a surer mastery of style. One hopes that Miss Cather will write more such novels; from them comes the truest interpretation of American life.

Especially timely now that so much stress is being laid on the "back to the land" movement is Scribners' announcement of *The Country Life Reader* by Professor O. J. Stevenson. The objects of this volume, which will consist of selections in prose and verse dealing with subjects connected with rural life, are to waken the country boy to a realization of the beauty and meaning of the world about him, and to give useful information about various activities of the country.

